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Wagers hooked on wireless

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Jane Wagers discovered radio in high school, and six years later she's still getting her radio "fix" as KAUR's station manager.

"It's both a job and a hobby at the same time. There is always something to do—it's a 24 hour job. During breaks, while I'm shopping, studying, or whatever, the station has to know where to reach me."

Wagers has been manager for 2½ years and during that time has seen the station grow and respond to changes.

"We are on the air 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. Our record service and volume has improved.

"We've become more reliable and more responsive to listeners. We change with the culture. For instance, when New Wave was popular, we played New Wave music.

"We may have become bigger than we should have. More of the community is listening, so we have responded with more news, public services, features, and promotion," Wagers remarked.

KAUR is non-commercial, so they seek sponsors for their programs, instead of selling air time. They've done well with that system.

"KAUR is at the same time a divorced and integral part of the campus. It's not under ASA, UBG or Students Activities. We report to Administration. In that sense we are separate. It shows

when it comes to things like NSO, where we don't promote involvement with KAUR. We are working on getting to freshmen. First semester we usually don't have too many freshmen, but by second semester, freshmen have heard of us by word-of-mouth.

"The executive staff has been going like gangbusters. They are so ambitious. They are working on a publicity campaign to get more people involved," commented Wagers.

In high school, Wagers worked at a Chippewa Falls radio station as a news announcer, sound mixer and disc jockey. She applied to Augustana as a junior after visiting the campus for a debate camp. She was also accepted at Harvard.

During her freshmen year she worked as station secretary and learned the ropes under manager Brian Bonde. In her sophomore year she took over as manager.

"I found out there's more to radio—I had to learn to deal with people. There was a slight problem getting the older males to respect me as a new manager with new ways of doing things. They'd look at me 'You're not really serious.' But I was able to show them that I knew radio."

As manager, she had to learn about electronics, physics, and organization.

"I've learned so much. Budgeting, managing, legal matters, the FCC regulations, continuity, advertising...every day I learn something new."

Wagers has memorized the 56 time slots of disc jockeys so she is prepared in emergencies.

"There are a hundred things that can go wrong, and I have to be available in a crisis.

"I'm not a general commanding an army. We are a group of incredibly different people who complement each other. I just steer the boat. It's like an orchestra—if someone is missing, people have to adjust."

Wagers has been conducting so long she feels KAUR has engulfed her life.

"I try to keep KAUR and Jane separate, but it's hard. I had to fire a friend. If I yell at someone for a mistake at the station, I hope we can leave the station and still be friends.

"It's flattering to be recognized by people I don't know but it's also inconvenient. I have friendships outside KAUR, and I also try to keep my school work top priority. It's hard to do when I like radio so much."

Wagers would like to work for "Voice of America," a government broadcast that goes to foreign countries. She would also like to try advertising eventually in the radio medium.

"I can't get away from radio. It's an addiction," Wagers said.

"I wouldn't mind teaching. What they learn here is a solid foundation they can carry to any station in the country.

"It's great to see people realize what they're actually doing when their friends say, 'Yeah, I heard you on the radio.' Their faces light up."